IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claims 1 to 3, 5, 13 to 15, 17, 25 and 26 as shown below. The claims, as pending in the subject application, read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A color ink-jet recording apparatus using a black recording head that ejects black ink on the basis of black image data and color recording heads that eject ~~ejects~~ color ink on the basis of color image data, the color ink permeating through a recording medium at a higher speed than said black ink, the apparatus completing a record image in a predetermined recording area on said recording ~~media~~ medium by causing said recording heads to perform a plurality of recording scans ~~scanning operations~~ in said predetermined recording area, the apparatus comprising:

data ~~dividing~~ generating means, which, for each of the plurality of recording heads, uses mask patterns to generate image data ~~uses division patterns~~ for each of said recording scans ~~to allot black image data~~ corresponding to said predetermined recording area, so that black image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area are allotted to each of said recording scans, and color image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area are allotted ~~to allot color image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area~~ to each of said recording scans,

wherein ~~said data dividing means sets different allotment rates for the division patterns for said black image data and color image data used during the same recording scan~~ each of the mask patterns for said black image data and color image data used during the same recording scan has different allotment rates.

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2.   (Currently Amended) A color ink-jet recording apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~division~~ mask pattern having different allotment rates are used as the ~~division~~ mask patterns for said black image data and color image data.

3.   (Currently Amended) A color ink-jet recording apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising black image data allotment rate setting means for setting, for each of said recording scans, allotment rates for the ~~division~~ mask patterns for said black image data; and

        color image data allotment rate setting means for setting, for each of said recording scans, allotment rates for the ~~division~~ mask patterns for said color image data; wherein both said image data allotment rate setting means set different allotment rates for the ~~division~~ mask patterns for said black image data and color image data used during the same recording scan.

4.   (Original) A color ink-jet recording apparatus according to claim 3, wherein if said black image data allotment rate setting means sets an allotment rate higher than a predetermined reference allotment rate, the color image data allotment rate setting means sets an allotment rate lower than said reference allotment rate, and if said black image data allotment rate setting means sets an allotment rate lower than said reference allotment rate, the color image data allotment rate setting means sets an allotment rate higher than said reference allotment rate.

5. (Currently Amended) A color ink-jet recording apparatus according to claim 4, wherein said reference allotment rate is 100/N% where N is the number of a plurality of recording scans ~~scanning operations~~ performed in said predetermined recording area.

6. (Original) A color ink-jet recording apparatus according to claim 1, wherein when a black image is to be formed in said predetermined area, before or after the black ink is caused to impact the recording medium, at least one of said plural types of color ink is caused to impact locations onto which the black ink is ejected.

7. (Original) A color ink-jet recording apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a thinning means, which thins said black image data at a predetermined thinning rate and causes the plural types of color ink to impact portions of the recording area in which said black image data has been thinned.

8. (Original) A color ink-jet recording apparatus according to claim 1, wherein at least one of said plural types of color ink is reactive and tends to cause said black ink to solidify or cohere when contacting with said black ink.

9. (Original) A color ink-jet recording apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said recording heads executes recording only during scans in one of the forward and backward scanning directions, and in the scanning direction in which the recording is carried out, said color recording heads are arranged in front of said black recording head.

10.　(Original)　A color ink-jet recording apparatus according to claim 1, wherein if said recording heads carry out recording in both the forward and backward scanning directions, then during the first recording scan, said color image data has a higher allotment rate than said black image data.

11.　(Original)　A color ink-jet recording apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said plural color ink types include cyan, magenta, and yellow ink.

12.　(Original)　A color ink-jet recording apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said recording heads exert thermal energy to generate bubbles in the ink so that energy generated by the bubbles causes the ink to be ejected.

13.　(Currently Amended)　A color ink-jet recording method using a black recording head that ejects black ink on the basis of black image data and color recording heads that eject ~~ejects~~ color ink on the basis of color image data, the color ink permeating through a recording medium at a higher speed than said black ink, the method completing a record image in a predetermined recording area on said recording medium by causing said recording heads to perform a plurality of <u>recording scans</u> ~~scanning operations~~ in said predetermined recording area, the method comprising the steps of:

<u>for each of the plurality of recording heads, generating image data for each of said recording scans corresponding to said predetermined recording area, by using mask patterns, so that black image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area are allotted to each of said recording scans, and color image data corresponding to said</u>

predetermined recording area are allotted to each of said recording scans ~~dividing black and color image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area into black and color image data corresponding to each of said recording scans by using division patterns for each of said recording scans to allot black image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area to each of said recording scans, while allotting color image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area to each of said recording scans~~; and

ejecting said black ink and said color ink from said black recording head and said color recording heads during each of said recording scans on the basis of the data allotted to each of said recording scans in said ~~dividing~~ generating step;

wherein each of the mask patterns for said black image data and color image data used during the same recording scan has different allotment rates ~~said data dividing step sets different allotment rates for the division patterns for said black image data and color image data used during the same recording scan~~.

14. (Currently Amended) A color ink-jet recording method according to claim 13, wherein ~~division~~ mask pattern having different allotment rates are used as the ~~division~~ mask patterns for said black image data and color image data.

15. (Currently Amended) A color ink-jet recording method according to claim 13 , further comprising the black image data allotment rate setting step of setting, for each of said recording scans, allotment rates for the ~~division~~ mask patterns for said black image data; and

the color image data allotment rate setting step of setting, for each of said

recording scans, allotment rates for the ~~division~~ <u>mask</u> patterns for said color image data;

wherein both said image data allotment rate setting steps set different allot

rates for the division patterns for said black image data and color image data used during

the same recording scan.

16.   (Original) A color ink-jet recording method according to claim 15,

wherein if said black image data allotment rate setting step sets an allotment rate higher

than a predetermined reference allotment rate, then the color image data allotment rate

setting step sets an allotment rate lower than said reference allotment rate, and if said black

image data allotment rate setting step sets an allotment rate lower than said reference

allotment rate, the color image data allotment rate setting step sets an allotment rate higher

than said reference allotment rate.

17.   (Currently Amended) A color ink-jet recording method according to

claim 16, wherein said reference allotment rate is $100/N\%$ where N is the number of a

plurality of <u>recording scans</u> ~~scanning operations~~ performed in said predetermined recording

area.

18.   (Original) A color ink-jet recording method according to claim 13,

wherein when a black image is to be formed in said predetermined area, before or after the

black ink is caused to impact the recording medium, at least one of said plural types of

color ink is caused to impact locations onto which the black ink is ejected.

19.   (Original) A color ink-jet recording method according to claim 13, further comprising a thinning step, which thins said black image data at a predetermined thinning rate and causes the plural types of color ink to impact portions of the recording area in which said black image data has been thinned.

20.   (Original) A color ink-jet recording method according to claim 13, wherein at least one of said plural types of color ink is reactive and tends to cause said black ink to solidify or cohere when contacting with said black ink.

21.   (Original) A color ink-jet recording method according to claim 13, wherein said recording heads execute ~~executes~~ recording only during scans in one of the forward and backward scanning directions, and in the scanning direction in which the recording is carried out, said color recording heads are arranged in front of said black recording head.

22.   (Original) A color ink-jet recording method according to claim 13, wherein if said recording heads carry out recording in both the forward and backward scanning directions, then during the first recording scan, said color image data has a higher allotment rate than said black image data.

23.   (Original) A color ink-jet recording method according to claim 13, wherein said plural color ink types include cyan, magenta, and yellow ink.

24. (Original) A color ink-jet recording method according to claim 13, wherein said recording heads exert thermal energy to generate bubbles in the ink so that energy generated by the bubbles causes the ink to be ejected.

25. (Currently Amended) A method of processing image data used in a color ink-jet ink-jet recording apparatus using a black recording head that ejects black ink on the basis of black image data and color recording heads that eject ejects color ink on the basis of color image data, the color ink permeating through a recording medium at a higher speed than said black ink, the apparatus completing a record image in a predetermined recording area on said recording medium by causing said recording heads to perform a plurality of recording scans scanning operations in said predetermined recording area, the method comprising the step of:

for each of the plurality of recording heads, generating image data for each of said recording scans corresponding to said predetermined recording area, by using mask patterns, so that black image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area are allotted to each of said recording scans, and color image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area are allotted to each of said recording scans; and dividing black and color image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area into black and color image data corresponding to each of said recording scans by using division patterns for each of said recording scans to allot black image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area to each of said recording scans, while allotting color image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area to each of said recording scans;

wherein each of the ~~division~~ mask patterns for said black image data and color image data used during the same recording scan has different allotment rates.

26.   (Currently Amended) A program for executing image processing on image data used in a color ink-jet ~~ink-jet~~ recording apparatus using a black recording head that ejects black ink on the basis of black image data and color recording heads that ejects color ink on the basis of color image data, the color ink permeating through a recording medium at a higher speed than said black ink, the apparatus completing a record image in a predetermined recording area on said recording medium by causing said recording heads to perform a plurality of recording scans ~~scanning operations~~ in said predetermined recording area, the ~~method~~ program comprising the step of:

for each of the plurality of recording heads, generating image data for each of said recording scans corresponding to said predetermined recording area, by using mask patterns, so that black image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area are allotted to each of said recording scans, and color image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area are allotted to each of said recording scans; and ~~dividing black and color image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area into black and color image data corresponding to each of said recording scans by using division patterns for each of said recording scans to allot black image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area to each of said recording scans, while allotting color image data corresponding to said predetermined recording area to each of said recording scans;~~

wherein each of the ~~division~~ mask patterns for said black image data and color image data used during the same recording scan has different allotment rates.

27.   (Original) A computer-readable storage medium storing the program set forth in claim 26.